



ADVENT WEEK THREE: ABIDING JOY

December 15, 2019

Pastor Brad Williams

BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

MAIN TEXT(S):

Nehemiah 8:10; Luke 2:8-10; John 15:11; Romans 5:2-5; John 16:21-22

SUMMARY

The theme of this third installment of our Advent series is joy. People have a deep desire to find joy or happiness. We all desire to be happy. Most of us seek happiness in prosperity and security. The problem is that prosperity and security can be hard to achieve, and even if you achieve them, you find they don't ultimately make you happy. The evidence for this in our own country is clear. Despite being one of the most prosperous and comfortable societies of all time, people still aren't happy.

The Bible gives us a different definition of joy. This joy is not based on our circumstances. On the contrary, this joy often grows best in the midst of difficulty. This joy comes from the security we find knowing that God sees us, hears us, and has even entered into our world through Jesus. Our joy is not based on what's happening around us. It is based on the security we have knowing that we have a God who cares for us and gracefully provides for us, no matter what life brings our way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What words, images, people, etc. come to your mind when you hear the word "joy"?
2. What is your favorite Christmas tradition?
3. What Christmas gift brought you the most joy when you were a child?
4. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week?
What's one that you are dreading?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. In Nehemiah 8:10, why did Nehemiah tell the people not to grieve? What had caused the people to grieve in the first place? How do the people react later in the chapter?
2. What message did the angels bring to the shepherds in Luke 2:8-10? What was the good news that was to bring great joy? How did the shepherds react to this news?
3. In John 15:11, what is the "this" that Jesus told his disciples that should make their joy complete? What is this joy based on, according to this text?
4. According to Romans 5:2-5, why can we glory in or sufferings?
How is this text related to the theme of joy?
5. What does Jesus compare his disciple's joy to in John 16:21-22?
What do you learn about joy from this passage?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What types of things do people in our world look for that brings them joy?
Is there a difference between what people in the church look to for joy and what those outside the church look to? Why or why not?
2. Pastor Brad said in his message that if people don't think they have any hope of being able to pursue happiness, they will turn to despair. Have you seen this principle at work in the life of anyone you know (or know of)? Why do you think despair is the natural reaction to not being able to seek joy?
3. What is the source of joy according to the passages for this week? Is it based on circumstances? Why or why not?
4. Who do you know (or know of) that is a good example of glorying in sufferings? How have these sufferings ultimately impacted this person's life/character?
5. Jesus uses the example of childbirth to show how the disciples' grief will be turned to joy. What are other examples (from the Bible, history, people you know) of difficult circumstances that have ultimately brought about joy

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What do you look to that brings you joy? How has that changed over the years/seasons of your life?
2. Have you ever experienced (or are you currently experiencing) despair because of a lack of joy or ability to pursue happiness? What happened? If you regained hope, how did this happen?
3. Is your sense of joy and happiness based on your circumstances? Why or why not?
4. Tell about a time when difficult circumstances eventually brought about great joy in your life. How can you see God at work in this time? How has your relationship with him changed because of this?
5. How does the Christmas story bring you joy this year? How does Jesus' work on earth encourage you in your life today?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What is one thing that you learned about joy from this message/discussion?
Based on that, what one thing can you do this week to develop greater joy in your life?
2. How can your group pray for you as you seek to overcome despair in your life?
Is there anything they can do to encourage you this week?
3. Are you currently going through a difficult circumstance? Which Scripture from this week's sermon do you find most encouraging? How can your group pray for or encourage you in the midst of this season?